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Visiting state's first community college sites, O'Bannon hails 'major step forward'

Calling it "a major step forward" in Indiana education, Governor Frank O'Bannon today is kicking off the state's new community college system with visits to three of its first four sites.

"The new Community College of Indiana will shape a better future for our citizens and for our state," O'Bannon says. The system is a partnership between Ivy Tech State College and Vincennes University.

The governor is speaking on campuses in **Indianapolis** (10 a.m. EST, 1 W. 26th St.), **Lafayette** (12 noon EST, 619 N. 9th St.) and **Gary** (2:15 p.m. CDT, 1440 E. 35th Ave.). O'Bannon plans a later visit to the fourth of the pilot sites, in **Evansville**.

At any of those locations, students may enroll now for the official community college start in August as well as for a limited number of classes this summer.

Over the next six years, the Community College of Indiana expects to gear up at all 23 Ivy Tech locations, combining Ivy Tech's statewide accessibility and extensive technical programs with VU's wide array of courses in general education.

Traveling with O'Bannon are Stan Jones, Indiana's commissioner for higher education; Vincennes University President Phillip Summers, Ph.D.; and Chuck Harris, vice president of development, Ivy Tech State College.

They are also showcasing a new public service announcement hitting the air today in the four cities to promote enrollment. In the spot, Hoosiers' overlapping voices talk about wanting "more than a dead-end job. I want to keep learning, and broaden my horizons and get the promotion I deserve."

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At O'Bannon's urging, state lawmakers approved the Community College of Indiana in 1999. It will provide new educational opportunities at convenient times, nearby locations and affordable prices for Hoosiers who are juggling work and family responsibilities. Higher skills will mean better jobs and more of them, the governor explained.

The Indiana effort is modeled in part on those in other states, where community colleges have aided economic development. In Illinois, for example, community colleges helped create and retain more than 135,000 jobs in the past five years.

If Indiana's response to community colleges matches that of Illinois, 80-90,000 more Indiana adults would be pursuing higher education — whether for a two-year degree, a single semester or a single course to develop a particular skill, O'Bannon said.

To keep costs manageable, plans are to hold tuition at a flat fee of \$66.20 per credit hour for Indiana residents through the year 2005.

States with thriving community colleges also see growth in their four-year institutions of higher learning. Students who earn a two-year degree through the Community College of Indiana will have more options to transfer credits to four-year colleges and universities.

"Vincennes is excited about partnering with Ivy Tech and expanding our presence across the state," said VU President Summers. "With a uniform statewide curriculum, we can provide more opportunities for students to transfer credits to four-year institutions."

"It has become increasingly important to help businesses and students connect so the maximum number of students is exposed to career opportunities in Indiana," added Ivy Tech President Gerald Lamkin. "We can build on our technology focus and help educate students to create a more skilled work force."

"With additional education and training, a greater percentage of our state's work force will be more qualified, resulting in better businesses and a higher quality of life for the people of Indiana," said Jones, the commissioner for higher education.

Indiana becomes the 43rd state to establish a community college system. More information is available, toll-free, at 1-888-489-5463, or on the Community College of Indiana website: **www.ccindiana.net**.

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